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PREFACE.

THIS Sermon was preached during the months of March and April, at the Churches of Mitcheldever and Swarraton, and at the Chapels of Popham, St. John's, Portsea, and the Holy Trinity, Gosport: and originated from the circumstances explained in the Appendix. The writer, or rather the editor, as he may more appropriately style himself, trusts there is no appearance of an attempt at novelty in bringing the subject forward; many of the arguments, and even large extracts have been taken from President Dwight's Sermon "On the Perpetuity of the Sabbath," in his valuable "System of Theology," whose sentiments are in complete accordance with Archbishop Usher's equally valuable "Body of Divinity." It is still farther hoped, that there is no appearance of

an attempt to shrink from bringing the subject faithfully, openly and fairly forward, but rather that he has followed the example of many faithful men who have preceded him, and as the Bible requires. It is believed, that an uncompromising faithfulness and honesty is always most respected by faithful, honest and truly liberal men; the writer is quite aware that as he condemns many of the immoral practices of the world, he cannot expect to receive its commendation, but he only claims for himself that liberty of thought, word and action in his lawful calling, which the professedly liberal of the present day so strenuously claim for themselves. "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe¹:" Any person therefore may well be content to be esteemed a fool for Christ's sake. "He must increase, but I must decrease²."

Its chief object is to promote a sound and judicious enquiry into the obligatory character of the Christian Sabbath, for which purpose a cheaper edition is published for more extensive circulation; and the profits on the better edition will be applied to promoting the general measure: if

¹ 1 Corinthians i. 21.

² John iii. 30.

therefore the style in which it has been treated shall meet with approval, it is hoped its circulation will be encouraged by all who esteem the privileges of the Sabbath a blessing to mankind.

STRATTON, WINCHESTER,

May 18th, 1830.

S E R M O N,

&c.

EXODUS XX. 8.

Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

OUR blessed Lord declared, that “the Sabbath was made for man.” It was an institution of God, ordained even when man was in his first estate of innocency, for his especial comfort and happiness. It was intended to be a *commemoration* of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in the creation of the world. It was intended to *maintain*, and, if possible, to *increase holiness in man*, while in a state of *innocence*. After the fall, it was intended to furnish an opportunity to *fallen man* of acquiring happiness, and of seeking salvation; and of giving to the laborious classes of mankind an opportunity of *resting from toil*. And since the resurrection of Christ, it has been observed to commemorate the completion of the work of God’s *new creation* — *the work of re-*

demption; for it was on the Christian Sabbath that the Lord of Life rose triumphant from the grave, and gave manifest proof of his complete victory over death and the grave, and over "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Such were the divine purposes for which the Sabbath was instituted, and the reason why Christians commemorate it on the first day of the week instead of on the seventh.

May the Spirit of God enable us rightly to understand this important subject. Whilst we consider,

I. The holy authority and binding character of the law of the Sabbath. And,

II. Some few instances of its grievous profanation in the present day.

We are to consider,

I. The holy authority and binding character of the law of the Sabbath.

First. It was instituted by God when man was in Paradise in his state of innocency, as we learn from Genesis ii. 1—3.

Next, it is twice placed in the midst of the ten commandments, in Deuteronomy v. 12—15., and in the chapter from whence the text is taken¹: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. *Six days* shalt thou labour, and *do ALL thy work*: but the *seventh day* is the *Sabbath of the Lord* THY

¹ Exodus xx. 8—11.

God ; in it thou shalt not do ANY work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates ; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh-day : wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it."

Now peculiar authority was given to *this commandment*, together with the remaining nine, since *it was spoken with an awful and audible voice, from the midst of the thunders and lightnings, which covered Mount Sinai.* The splendour and majesty of this scene were such, that "all the people who were in the camp trembled. And when they saw the thunderings and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they removed and stood afar off ; and said unto Moses, 'Speak *thou* with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' And even Moses himself exceedingly feared and quaked ¹."

Again, its divine authority is impressed upon us by the fact, that *this commandment was written by the finger of God, on one of the two tables of stone, originally prepared by himself, and destined to contain nothing but this, and the other precepts of the ten commandments.* A table of stone and a pillar of stone were in ancient times direct marks

¹ Exodus xix. 16—25. Hebrews xii. 21,

of the intended continuance of whatever was engraved on them. This very natural mark God was pleased to adopt in the present case, to show the perpetual obligation of these commandments. *The remainder of the law given by Moses was all written in a book* ; and was here intentionally and entirely distinguished, as to its importance and continuance, from the law of the ten commandments. *Nothing but the ten commandments* was ever so honoured as to be written by the finger of God on tables of stone prepared by himself.

When Moses, in his zeal to destroy the idolatry of the Israelites, had broken the two tables of stone, fashioned and writtened upon in this manner, God directed him to make two other tables of stone like the first. On these he was pleased to write the same commandments a *second time*. In this act he has taught us, that he was pleased to become a *second time* the recorder of these precepts with his own hand, rather than that the entire distinction between these precepts and others should not be clearly marked.

Every part of this solemn transaction, it is to be remembered, was the result of *contrivance and design* ; of contrivance and design on the part of *God himself*. It speaks, therefore, a language which is to be examined and understood by us. Is not this language perfectly intelligible, and perfectly plain ? Is it not clear, beyond every rational dispute, that God designed to distinguish

these precepts from every other part of the law of Moses, both as to their superior importance, and to ensure their continuance ?

It is further to be remembered, that *this commandment is delivered in the same ABSOLUTE manner as the other nine.* There is no limitation to the language in which it is contained. "Honor thy father and thy mother," is binding on all children to whom this precept shall come. "Thou shalt not steal," is a precept binding on every one who shall know it. Every Gentile as well as every Jew, "who sinneth under the law, will (according to the spirit of the apostle's declaration) be judged by the law." Agreeably to this just construction, every person to whom the fourth commandment shall come, is bound to remember "the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy."

It hence follows that the fourth commandment is of the same character with the remaining nine; and *it must stand with them, or they must fall with it.* It is as much a part of the *moral* law as any of the others, and although there may be found *ceremonial observances* attached to it, which with the rest of the *ceremonial law* were to be done away in Christ; yet Christ has not done away with the fourth commandment of the moral law ¹, as a rule of holy life binding on Christians.

¹ Exodus xx. 8—11.

For the same general reasoning which would do away with that commandment must also do away with the other nine, and then the sixth and eighth commandments would be no longer binding on men. For who will say that the profanation of the Sabbath is *less* displeasing in the sight of God, than murder or theft ? Or even less injurious to civil society ? Is not Sabbath profanation full well known to be the forerunner of every crime ? He who was "the Lord of the Sabbath," too-well knew the importance of its *religious* observance ever to speak a word against it ; but by his regular and devout obedience to the law of the fourth commandment he magnified it, and made it honourable—by his holy example he sanctified the Jewish Sabbath, previous to his death—and by his divine presence, the Lord's day after his resurrection. And his own words in the beautiful sermon on the Mount make every part of the *moral law* (and the fourth commandment, therefore, as well as the other nine,) binding on all Christians. "Think not that I am come to *destroy* the *law* or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, *but to fulfil*. For, verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, *one jot* or *one tittle* shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall *break one of these LEAST commandments*, and *shall teach men so*, he *shall be called the least* in the kingdom of heaven :

but whosoever shall *do and teach them*, the *same shall be called great* in the kingdom of heaven ¹."

The law of the Sabbath is eminently MORAL, as the indispensable means of preserving in the world a real and voluntary obedience to all the other commandments. Wherever the Sabbath is not observed, religion dies of course, and morality of every kind is forgotten, except so far as convenience and selfishness may keep the forms of it alive. Thus the fourth commandment is of a really moral nature, no less than the others, as truly of infinite importance, and as strictly binding on all the children of Adam. Its place amongst the ten commandments, therefore, was given it with very great propriety; and "what God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

But the circumstances attending the *change* of the *day of rest*, from the *seventh* to the *first* day of the week—from the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord's Day, are most interesting, and the sanction of inspiration—the presence of our Lord, and the practice of the Apostles, gives it a *divine authority*.

The Evangelists agree in stating that the day on which our Lord was laid in the sepulchre "was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on;" St. Luke (xxiii. 55 and 56,) further adds: "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, rested the sabbath day, *according to the com-*

¹ Matthew v. 17—19.

mandment." And St. Matthew (xxviii. 1—6.) " In the *end* of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, the angel said, He is not here; for he is risen;"—" and the eleven, with them that were with them," heard and rejoiced in the glad tidings that day announced, " The Lord is risen indeed ¹." Hence it is plain that our Lord was buried the day before the Sabbath day—that the women rested on the Sabbath day—and that on the day following, that is the first day of the week, our Lord rose from the dead, and gave evident proof of the completion of *His new creation*—the work of *redemption*. It was truly a Sabbath to the disciples, because on that day their sorrow was turned into joy ². And from Scripture we further learn, that our Lord and his followers continued to commemorate the first day of the week, as "*the holy of the LORD*," and so to reverence it as to make it "*Honourable* ³." *They met together*—" Then the same day at evening, being the *first day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were *assembled*, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, ' Peace be unto you ⁴.'" In a similar manner did He again appear unto them, eight days after, on the first day of the week, when they *were assembled* together ⁵. About thirty years after, *on the first day of the week*, the

¹ Luke xxiv. 33, 34. ² John xvi. 20. ³ Isa. lviii. 13.

⁴ John xx. 19.

⁵ John xx. 26.

disciples were assembled together *to break bread*, and Paul *preached* unto them¹. About the same period, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, writes, “Now concerning the *collection* for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon *the first day of the week* let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come².” Hence again it is plain that the early Christians, in conformity with the example of their Lord, on *the first day of the week*—met together—broke bread—attended the preaching of the Gospel—and exercised acts of charity. What was this but sanctifying the *first day* of the week, by setting it apart for an holy and religious purpose? Is there any account of any other day of the week being observed in like manner? Is not this such clear evidence of the religious observance of the first day of the week by our Lord and the early Christians, as should satisfy every reasonable mind? “The Lord is risen,” was the cause for the change of the day, “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” How else could the change have been effected? For there appears no fraudulent end to have been gained by it, and it never seemed to be made the pretext for setting aside the law of the fourth commandment and its duties; but

¹ Acts xx. 7.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

rather that Christians might for ever celebrate the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, so fully manifested on the *first day* of the week.

Lastly. "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day," says St. John¹. The book of the Revelation of St. John was probably written about the year 96, above sixty years after the resurrection of Christ. At that time, there was a day known, styled and esteemed by St. John, by Christians generally, and by God himself, as the *Lord's day*; or a day peculiarly consecrated to Christ, the Lord mentioned by St. John in this passage. There is now, there has always been, but one such day; and but one manner in which the day can be the Lord's. This day is the Sabbath; a holy, heavenly rest from every sinful and every worldly concern. It is His, by being with authority appropriated to His own use by Himself; and by His requiring mankind, whenever it returns, to consecrate their time, their talents, and themselves, to His immediate service and religious worship. And this, His day—the Lord's day, was appointed to continue unto the end of the Gospel dispensation.

From hence it naturally becomes a subject of enquiry—How is the Lord's Day observed by professed Christians, dwelling in a Christian land, with both the Law and the Gospel so plainly and

¹ Rev. i. 10.

fully made known to them, that all that run may read it? Is it observed, as we might expect, by persons who claim the name of Christians? With this, as with many other things in a professedly Christian land, is there not much that every sincere Christian must mourn over? Could we, by faith, see Christ beholding this our highly favoured country, should we not also see Him weeping over her, seeing that the things which belong unto her peace are apparently hid from the eyes of her people? Would not the spirit of St. Paul have been stirred in him, could he have seen this professedly Christian country so grievously given to Sabbath profanations? This will lead us to consider,

II. Some instances of the grievous profanation of the Lord's Day in the present times.

Scripture teaches us to honour the Lord on His day—and forbids the doing our own ways—finding our own pleasure—or speaking our own words¹.

1st. The Lord's Day is profaned by *doing our own ways*—by employing it in transacting the business of this world instead of the next. The commandment is, “in the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy

¹ Isa. lviii. 13.

stranger that is within thy gates :” that is, we are neither to employ ourselves, nor others, nor our cattle in our worldly calling on the Lord’s Day ; and acts of charity and necessity are the alone exceptions which Christian liberty allows. Taking this as the rule, let the enquiry be made, How is the Lord’s day hallowed and sanctified in this country, as respects an entire cessation from all worldly business ? Without at present extending our enquiries to the thoughts and hearts of men, by which God judges, or even the retired chambers of those engaged in worldly concerns—How is it observed outwardly, in the light of noon-day ? Is there that total rest from all visible worldly business, which the very term Sabbath seems to indicate ? Nehemiah “ contended with the nobles of Judah,” because that “ in those days he saw in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses ; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day : and he testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem ¹.” Let all in this country, who are engaged in buying and selling on the Lord’s

¹ Nehemiah xiii. 15, 16.

Day, take heed to these words of Nehemiah, and so judge themselves that they be not judged of the Lord. Next, let all engaged in "Sunday travelling," enquire how far the reproof of Jeremiah (xvii. 19—27.) against bearing burdens on the Sabbath may not be applicable to them: the evil arising from Sunday travelling is immense, none but God knows its extent; by it that sacred day is made any thing but a day of rest to thousands; and all promoters of it unjustly take from the almost numberless servants and horses engaged, the blessing of rest which God has given them.

2ndly. The Lord's Day is profaned by *finding our own pleasure*—by employing it in worldly, instead of spiritual pleasures—it is the Lord's, and therefore to be employed in *finding His pleasure*, which is, that His creatures should delight themselves in Himself, and take pleasure in His service. How can worldly entertainments and amusements be made to accord and agree with these sentiments? Or how can those who enter into worldly entertainments and amusements on the Lord's Day think that they are *finding His pleasure*, and delighting themselves in Him and His service? This is equally applicable to those who enter into what are commonly considered the more refined and elegant recreations of society, as to those who are engaged in the more rude and boisterous hilarity of less cultivated and refined life; against which even the laws of civil society

raise their voice; and it is only the existence of the *indefensible* "Book of Sports," which prevents those laws from being enforced. May not the words of Solomon be here applicable? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: *but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment*¹."

And, lastly, the Lord's Day is profaned by *speaking our own words*—by making worldly instead of heavenly topics the subject of conversation on that day. Conversation naturally arises from those subjects to which the mind and attention is most directed: and here it will be found, that exterior objects have a vast influence, and none more so than those writings which in lively colours bring before us the actions and events of life, and if these should be in any measure in opposition to the will of our heavenly Father, how prejudicial must the effect be to His children. *Newspapers* CIRCULATED on Sundays, are, indeed, the too fruitful source of encouraging the *speaking our own words*². It is to be feared, they too frequently not only publish and disseminate what might properly engage our attention during six days of the week, but spread wickedness and vice under the mischievous, and too often successful

¹ Eccles. xi. 9.

² See Appendix.

vein of humour ; sin is spoken of in a strain rather to excite laughter in the thoughtless mind, than the most just abhorrence against that which is so offensive to God ; this is a poison which enters the very joints and marrow, and is silently, but too surely undermining the morals of the people of this country : and when it is published or circulated on a Sunday, it becomes the more deadly. That the evils consequent—on *buying and selling* on the Lord's Day—on *Sunday travelling*—on *Sunday entertainments and amusements*—and on the *circulation of Newspapers on Sundays*, are manifest, ALL who claim any character for morality, must allow ; and which also all who profess any value for the moral character of the country should be interested to correct. “To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us¹.” The ministers of God have no power to speak more or less than the Bible directs, and if they speak not according to its precepts, believe them not, but if their speech agreeth therewith blame them not.

“What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call on him for ? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day² ?” Who does not feel the truth of these

¹ Isa. viii. 20.

² Deut. iv. 7, 8.

words as respects England and her people at the present day? "Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"

Associated as this subject is with the nearest and dearest interests of our country, and with the moral character of her people; can a more practical application be made than by pleading with all classes of society to interest themselves in "keeping the Sabbath from polluting it?"

1st. *The ministers of God* are the most deeply interested in maintaining the honor of their acknowledged Lord: whose special office it is to proclaim His law, and to maintain the sanctity of His day. Does it not become them, therefore, to "Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, and say unto them that enter in, thus saith the Lord, hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers?" Perhaps it may not be sufficiently considered, that the Clergy of the Church of England are a National as well as Parochial Clergy: and that therefore, in virtue of their high and responsible office, it becomes them to unite in promoting the godly edification of the Nation at large, as well as each his own Parish in particular. May not the National Clergy be legitimately considered the guardians of the religion

¹ Deut. v. 29.

² Jer. xvii. 19—27.

and morality of the country? As such who can say how vast and beneficial would be their moral influence! If the Clergy are a valuable class of men, does it not arise from their active usefulness? And do not times like the present require all their activity to be brought forward, if they would be faithful to the trust committed to them.

2ndly. *Governors and magistrates* “are God’s ministers, sent by Him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well¹.” Inasmuch, as the quiet and good order of society greatly depend on the proper observance of the Sabbath; might not the words of Nehemiah be very appropriately applied to such as use not their authority and influence in checking the profanation of the Lord’s Day—“What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath Day? Ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath².”

3rdly. *Persons of influence* having much given them, from them also will much be required, which teaches us, that it becomes the duty of all who are placed in such situations, to employ their influence in encouraging true religion and virtue, and in checking wickedness and vice, especially amongst their servants and dependants, that they may “remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.”

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 14.

² Neh. xiii. 15—22.

4thly. *Parents* are especially bound to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to teach them to "remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

Lastly. All who desire to enjoy the eternal Sabbath in heaven, are they not bound now to "remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy?" Our God and our country now expects every man will strive by His grace "to do his duty in that state of life, unto which it has pleased God to call him '."

¹ Church Catechism.

THE END.

GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, LONDON.